

On page 4 of the Final Office Action, at paragraph 6, it is stated that the applicant is arguing more than that which is claimed, since the claims do not require that the stacking of the chambers be permanent, only that they are stacked.

Applicant now submits a further amended claim 22 in which a *permanently* vertical stack of vacuum chambers is recited. As the Examiner has appreciated, Furukawa does not disclose a permanently vertical stack of vacuum chambers, since in Furukawa, what is described is a rotor, rotatable in a vertical plane around a horizontal axis, having suspended a plurality of vacuum chambers to the rotor arms. At only single instances in the cycle is one of the rotating vacuum chambers "over" another one (see for instance in the figure on the cover page of the Furukawa patent, the chambers on the right top and right bottom side). As the rotor moves, these vacuum chambers will no longer be "vertically stacked".

Also, the Furukawa machine does not give the advantages obtained with the present invention (increase in productivity without significant increase in the floor area) as the rotating wheel takes up a great deal of floor space.

Applicants respectfully ask for allowance of the claims as amended.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and/or claims by this amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".

If any fees are deemed due, please charge same to Deposit Account No. 07-1765.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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The claims have been amended as follows:

22 (twice amended). A vacuum packaging machine for performing a vacuum sealing operation on product packages, comprising a permanently vertical stack of vacuum chambers each arranged to receive at least one unsealed product package and operable to perform an independent vacuum sealing operation on the at least one product package.